


**CONCLUSION**

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration, withdrawal of all grounds of rejections, and allowance of claims 12-23, 25-34, and 36-45 in due course. The Examiner is invited to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative by telephone at the number listed below to discuss any outstanding issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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**MARKED UP VERSION OF CLAIMS SHOWING AMENDMENTS**

12. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1[1]3 wherein the foam material includes a proximal section and a distal section, the one or more slits in the distal section remaining sealed as the flexible medical device is introduced first into the one or more slits in the proximal section.

13. (Amended) [The apparatus of claim 11] Apparatus for facilitating the insertion of a flexible medical device into a body, comprising:

(a) a sheath comprising

a proximal hub portion,

an elongated body portion extending distally from the proximal hub portion, at least some of the elongated body portion capable of being placed into the body,

a passageway extending through the proximal hub and elongated body portions, the passageway being defined by an inner surface of the sheath, and

[wherein the sheath comprises] a pair of lines extending at least some of the length, and on opposite sides, of the sheath, at least the sheath being separable along the lines[.]; and

(b) a valve comprising

a foam material filling at least some of the length of the passageway in the elongated body portion, the length of the foam material within the passageway being greater than the width of the foam material at any point within the passageway, and

one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material, none of the slits extending in width to the inner surface of the sheath, the one or more slits capable of allowing the flexible medical device to pass therethrough and sealing around the device.

17. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1[1]3 wherein the elongated body portion comprises at least a first section and a second section, a first cross-sectional area of the first section being greater than a second cross-sectional area of the second section.
21. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1[1]3 wherein the proximal hub portion comprises a pair of wings extending substantially perpendicular to the elongated body portion of the sheath.
22. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1[1]3 wherein the foam material comprises a closed cell foam.
23. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1[1]3 wherein the foam material is affixed to a portion of an inner surface of the sheath that defines the passageway.
25. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 2[4]6 wherein the foam material includes a proximal section and a distal section, the one or more slits in the distal section remaining sealed as the flexible medical device is introduced first into the one or more slits in the proximal section.
26. (Amended) [The apparatus of claim 24,] Apparatus for facilitating the insertion of a flexible medical device into a body, comprising:

(a) a sheath comprising

a proximal hub portion,

an elongated body portion extending distally from the proximal hub portion, at least some of the elongated body portion capable of being placed into the body,

a passageway extending through the proximal hub and elongated body portions, the passageway being defined by an inner surface of the sheath, and

[wherein the sheath further comprises] a pair of lines extending at least some of the length, and on opposite sides, of the sheath, at least the sheath being separable along the lines[.]; and

(b) a valve comprising

a foam material filling at least some of the length of the passageway in the elongated body portion, the length of the foam material within the passageway being greater than the width of the foam material at any point within the passageway, the foam material being affixed to a portion of the inner surface of the sheath, and

one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material, the one or more slits capable of allowing the flexible medical device to pass therethrough and sealing around the device.

30. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 2[4]6 wherein none of the one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material extend in width to the inner surface of the sheath.

33. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 2[4]6 wherein the proximal hub portion comprises a pair of wings extending substantially perpendicular to the elongated body portion of the sheath.

34. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 2[4]6 wherein the foam material comprises a closed cell foam.

36. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 3[5]9 wherein the foam material includes a proximal section and a distal section, the one or more slits in the distal section remaining sealed as the flexible medical device is introduced first into the one or more slits in the proximal section.

37. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 3[5]9 wherein none of the one or more self-sealing slits extends in width to an inner surface of the sheath that defines the passageway.

38. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 3[5]9 wherein the one or more self-sealing slits substantially prevent the flow of gas into the passageway of the sheath.

39. (Amended) [The apparatus of claim 35] Apparatus for facilitating the insertion of a flexible medical device into a body, comprising:

(a) a sheath comprising

a proximal hub portion,

an elongated body portion extending distally from the proximal hub portion,

a passageway extending through the proximal hub and elongated body portions, and

[wherein the sheath further comprises] a pair of lines extending at least some of the length, and on opposite sides, of the sheath, at least the sheath being separable along the lines[.]; and

(b) a valve comprising

an injected foam material filling at least some of the length of the passageway in the elongated body portion, the length of the foam material within the passageway being greater than the width of the foam material at any point within the passageway, and

one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material, the foam material and the one or more slits serving as a valve in the passageway of the sheath.

42. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 3[6]9 wherein the foam material defines a depression in the proximal section.

44. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 3[5]9 wherein the proximal hub portion comprises a pair of wings extending substantially perpendicular to the elongated body portion of the sheath.

45. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 3[5]9 wherein the foam material comprises a closed cell foam.